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MEMORANDUM

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN
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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

INFORMATION

October 15, 1970

SECRET/SENSITIVE

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger HK

SUBJECT: Hanoi Official Rejection of your Peace Proposal

The North Vietnamese Foreign Ministry has now issued an official statement which attacks and rejects your peace proposals of last week. The statement says that "the Vietnamese people and the Government of the DRV sternly condemn and categorically reject the deceptive 'peace' proposal made by the Nixon Administration."

The statement made the following comments on each of the subjects covered in your five points:

Troop Withdrawal

-- You were vague on this point in order to create the impression that we have good will on this issue. But, in fact, your proposal amounts to "mutual troop withdrawal."

-- Moreover, by linking U.S. withdrawal with the overall settlement of the Indochinese problem, we have actually posed more conditions for U.S. withdrawal.

Political Settlement

-- Your statement that we support the right to self-determination of the South Vietnamese people "boils down essentially to maintaining the Thieu-Ky-Khiem puppet clique" and asking for "the right of the Saigon puppet administration to organize fraudulent elections."

-- You grossly distorted their "fair and reasonable" undertaking to form a coalition government as an attempt at takeover by one party.

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Cease-Fire

-- A cease-fire proposal which does not settle other issues "amounts to compelling the Vietnamese people to lay down their arms."

-- The "Vietnamese people" are ready to carry out a cease-fire "after the parties concerned have agreed upon and signed the agreements designed to stop the war and restore peace in Vietnam."

An International Conference

-- Adequate forums exist for settlement of Indochinese questions. This is not the key question.

Prisoners of War

-- Our professions of humanity regarding an exchange of POW's cannot cover "the fact that the U.S. has waged in Vietnam the most atrocious war in history."

In addition, the DRV statement made the following general points:

-- Our new proposals are just designed to mislead public opinion and to cover our continued "aggression."

-- The DRV fully supports the Viet Cong September 17 proposal.

-- The "Vietnamese people will never accept a Pax Americana."

Comment: This rejection, which is not unexpected, is made in relatively harsh terms. It amounts almost to an over-reaction. Hanoi may feel that your proposals have made a real impact and that it needs to muster all its guns to knock them down in Vietnamese and international public opinion.

-- The statement also reveals a desire to return the discussion to Hanoi's own favorite topics rather than to focus on the proposals you have made.

-- I think the best line to take is a quiet and reasonable reiteration of our own proposals on their merits.

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